

MATERIAL CULTURE : AGRICULTURE

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bark of the black colour is soot. Sometimes this is obtained by burning 304
certain kinds of wood and coconut shells. It is finely powdered and [386]
mixed with water. Sometimes milk from the breast is said to be a
desirable solvent. After pricking, the parts are oiled with a mixture [57]
of *haldi* and *til* oil, which soothes the affected parts and removes any [783]
impurity from the touch of the tattooer.



Fig. 15

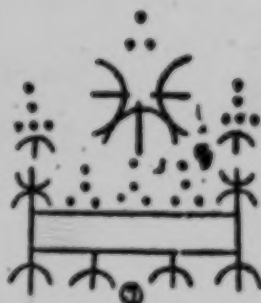


Fig. 16

AGRICULTURE. Kols mostly work as labourers in the fields 241
of others, and even where they rent their fields, there is nothing [42]
in their methods which is not characteristic of the whole [46]
countryside. February to April is the usual slack season, although
during the latter part of this period the wheat crop is harvested in
Central India, and the threshing season is on. Before the rains at the
end of June the ground is made ready for the first showers, and is
roughly scratched with rude ploughs. Just before the rains the seed
is broadcast in a prepared plot and is transplanted in the mud after
the monsoon has broken. Only men sow the seed. From July to
September the rice is growing and must be weeded and looked after. [462]
The weeding is generally done by women, but men also help. In
October the rice is cut and threshed and stored. The soil, still moist
from the monsoon rains, is now prepared for the wheat crop which is
sown about the end of October or early in November. The wheat
also requires weeding and care, and is ready for the harvest in late
March and April. Religious observances in connection with agri-
culture are described in a later chapter.

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cord the child will die if this is eaten; if it is buried deeply the child's teeth will appear late and if shallow they come early.¹

No traces of corresponding beliefs were found among the Kols, but they have the conviction, common to village India, that, should wrong persons get possession of the placenta and the umbilical cord they are likely to be used in magical practices dangerous to the mother and the infant. They should therefore be well-guarded and no outsider should have access to them; this is why they usually are not taken out of the house and are buried beneath the floor. A childless woman, by eating a portion of either the placenta or the umbilical cord may dispel the influences which keep her barren, but in so doing there is every chance that it will result in injury and even death in the family from which she received by stealth the required parts.

The work of the *dai* ordinarily lasts for six days, that is, during the full period of the uncleanness. Sometimes however, this is dispensed with as far as the full period is concerned, but during the time the *dai* is in the house it is her duty to care for the mother and child. For the first three days the mother is not supposed to take anything except a little milk but after that period is over she eats a bit of food after the first bath. If the child is a male the *dai* is usually paid one rupee for her work, and if the child be of the other sex, half that amount. During the period of her work the *dai* is given food from the household and when she leaves certain other presents and clothes are likely to be forthcoming. No difference in the period of uncleanness is made on account of sex—in either case it lasts for six days. In some places there is a relaxation of the strictness after the third day. A special drink said to be made of "ginger root (*Cleome viscosa*), raw sugar (*gur*) and certain jungle roots boiled together" is given to her three times a day until she is stronger.

During this period the mother is confined to her room. She should not touch anything and should spend the time lying down. Certain measures should now be taken to protect the mother and the young child from evil influences. These influences are particularly malignant during the first six days, but may be overcome by certain methods. A small fire should constantly burn in the lying-in room and should be kept alive by wood from the *bel* tree (*Aegle marmelos*). *Bel* is the wood of the gods and they are attracted by its smoke and no evil spirits dare be present at the same time. Sometimes twigs of *bel* wood are placed beside the infant or a twig of the same may be imbedded in the floor. The wood of the *sim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*)

1 The Sikors, p. 222.

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853 the child is fed and the money is used to buy an ornament. When
852 groups using the finger were asked about using the coin, they said that
574 it should not be done as the coin was not clean. Another group used
a mango leaf instead of the finger. In Rewa State one group stated
that just before the feeding of the child the mother should take it before
the household deity, naming Bhanmati in this case, and bowing down
before her ask the *devi* to protect the child, the household, and the
children yet to come.

304 NOSE AND EAR PIERCING. The piercing of the nose and ears is
[326] usually done by a *sowar* (goldsmith), although Kols may do it them-
selves. The hole is generally made by simply forcing the ends of the
ring through the lobe in the ear, but for the nose a bronze instrument
is used. As far as could be ascertained no ceremony is performed at
the time nor does the *sowar* repeat any *mantras*. The best time to have
piercing done is at the time of some large *mela* (religious gathering) in
the vicinity, for then there are plenty of *sowars* on hand awaiting work.
[57] When the nose is pierced a small plug of wood is first inserted, but the
[465] earrings are allowed from the beginning. The wound has onion and
turmeric rubbed into it, which help it to heal. The *sowar* is given
a *seer* of rice, some chillies and a little salt, or may be paid four pice for
the piercing and paid extra for the rings according to their value. It
has already been noted that the Kathautiyas use woodpith to enlarge
the holes in their ears and as a result their lobes have larger holes.
[301] Kols about Jubbulpore claimed that in Rewa every Kol woman should
have a ring of gold and silver on her ears or nose. Our observations
however did not confirm this claim.

788 Earrings help to protect the child from evil. Other things as well
[30] ward off evil influences and we found that the *ratka* nut (*Sapindus*
[824] *mukorossi*) and half a *ghata* nut (*Ziziphus xylopyrus* (?)) are put into
a strip of cloth, tied in a knot and worn round the neck. This is con-
sidered a good protection from *asas*, the evil eye, but it does not help
in the case of *bhuts*. Black bangles on the wrists and a white *pot* (dab)
[576] just in front of the ears also protect from the evil eye. A copper ring
may be put on one of the ankles for any evil spirit attacking the child
will become imprisoned in this. Good spirits live in amulets about
[426] the neck and drive off *bhuts*. At other times a piece of a broken or
discarded human tooth, tied on a string about the wrist, is considered
an effective protection. A strip of coloured cloth, red and yellow
being preferred, may also be tied somewhere about the child's person.
These are some of the measures which may be taken to protect the
young child during the early months and years of life. Other instances

787 [157] sible to pain, and very painful things may be resorted to without any apparent sensation on his part. Some drug may be partly responsible.

There are certain tests as to whether a person is truly possessed of the *devi* or not. The following are tests Kols have given.

1. A trembling and jerking of the head and limbs.
2. A state of semi-consciousness. He is clearly not himself, but is able to recognise the people who stand about him and ask him questions.
3. The uttering of the magic words: "ohha, ohha." No meanings could be given for this, but it represents a gasping effort.¹
4. The uttering of other unintelligible words and phrases.
- 787 785 5. The ability to walk and jump about on spiked sandals without evidence of pain or discomfort.
6. The lashing of the back with the iron lash until it is raw and bleeding.
7. The passing of the point of the trident through the tongue, cheek, or the skin of the neck and leaving it there from a half hour to two hours. During this time the person may move about, and if it is not through his tongue, may answer questions. This is said to be the supreme test. It is claimed that no sores or bleeding follow it and that it is treated by a mixture of ashes, *ghí*, *pan* and lime juice.

787 It is not held that all of these must concur to give adequate proof; and though often they do not go as far as really wounding themselves, the *bawa* is still regarded as a genuine one.

If two men, for instance, should be possessed at the same time by different *devis*, there may be a contest between those particular *devis* should there be any enmity between them. One may try to defeat the other, and the result is a fight between the men.

Kol women are also said to have the *bawa*, but with them this phenomenon is not nearly so common. It is taken as a sign that the deity is pleased with them.

During the time of the *bawa*, people come seeking guidance and help for their troubles: childless women ask what offerings they should give in order that they may bear children; domestic troubles are told and their solution asked for; illness, lack of work and the like, are all brought before the *devi*, and an answer is forthcoming.

787 171 564 Following is a description of a *bawa* seen by the author. It was a Domar *bawa*, not a Kol one, but Indians familiar with Kol *bawas* said that it was not essentially different. The *bawa* was performed under abnormal circumstances: it was not done before a regular shrine, but one improvised against a telephone pole.

The assistant first cleared a spot of grass making a bare area about two feet wide and three feet long. The one who was to perform then came and poured a little water over the spot, rubbed the earth

¹ It may be connected with the name *OJHA* or "medicine man".

A [i.e., a low caste Hindu. - Analyst]

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it is like the chaff being driven away and lost. While the *supra* is being waved the Baiga blows, and thus the divine afflatus is communicated to the person. 789 [648]

There is also a magic way of warding off the evil eye and removing its power from one affected by it. A Baiga is called, who, after the usual preparations and offerings, takes a stick and dips it in *til* oil. This is lighted and held over a vessel filled with water, all being performed in the presence of the person suspected of being the victim of the evil eye. If drops of the burning oil fall into the water with a hissing sound the person affected at once begins to feel the influence of the evil eye passing from him. But if the hairs on his body begin to stand up and he begins to feel faint, it is a sure sign that something is wrong and that there is an evil spirit in the case, or that the power of the evil eye requires still stronger measures to remove it. [648]

Kols also believe in, and practise, what may conveniently be called "cross-roads magic". The afflicted person is carried on a bed to the particular cross-roads where the ceremony is to be performed. He is set down in the centre and the friends who brought him make the offerings, which should be sacrificed in the same way as they would be at the village shrine. This may be done at any time of the day or night, but to be really effective it should not be witnessed by any stranger. If some one should approach while the sacrifices are being offered he will be warned away, for if he comes he may break the spell or may himself be affected. It is thought that the disease afflicting the person is loosed at the cross-roads and will attach itself to the first person who passes that way. For this reason Kols usually avoid cross-roads and if possible will pass by some other way. Sometimes a scape animal is released after the offerings are made, and it is believed that he will carry the disease away. 491 755 782 823

MEDICINES AND MAGIC. Among Kols illness and disease are often ascribed to the work of unfriendly spirits. Cholera and small-pox are particularly the work of the goddesses, and only through them can they be controlled. Other diseases are due to lesser evil spirits. In spite of this, there is also the attitude that in many cases illness is due to the foolishness of man, and that many types of illness can be cured by means of home remedies. Failing these, or any other explanation, the illness is looked upon as indeed the work of a spirit. There are many remedies in use by the Kols for the diseases which abound in India, and the remedies in common use among them are listed below. 753 757 278

- 757 Burns: charcoal dust is sprinkled over the burn from time to time. This should cake on it to be effective.
278 Chest Colds: mustard oil (from *Guisotia abyssinica*) is rubbed over the chest.
- [262] Colds: care should be observed regarding food. Only foods that give warmth to the body should be taken, such as grama, molasses, fish, and chicken curry.
- Diarrhoea: the seeds of *mumri* (or *mamira*) are soaked in water and the solution given to the patient.
- Eye Complaints: a solution containing onion juice and raw sugar (*gur*) from sugar cane, (*Saccharum officinarum*) is prepared which is called *bulni lai* due to its pinkish colour. The eye is washed in this solution.
- Fever: a shrub known as *galaran* (*Caesalpinia bonducella*) is very useful for this. Some leaves and fruit from this plant should be boiled in water and the solution given to the person ill. If it is an ordinary fever, not due to an evil spirit, this should reduce it.
- Leaves of the *nim* tree (*Melia azadirachta*) boiled in water is also an efficacious remedy in ordinary fevers.
- [752] Fractures: a broken bone should be fomented with hot *ghi* (clarified butter) and *haldi*. (*Curcuma longa*), mixed together. Sometimes ordinary splints are applied, and when this is done leaves and portions of the skin of the *hajor* (*Cissus quadrangularis*) plant should be put under the splints.
- Headaches: *hushur* (*Coleome viscosa*) is ground and the juice extracted. This juice is put into the ears. The juice of the *bhelwa* nut (*Semecarpus anacardium*) is occasionally used. This is the marking nut and its juice causes a burn and a great deal of counter irritation, and leaves a scar that persists.
- Itch: bits of the root and the bark of the *nim* tree are ground together and made into a paste which is applied to the affected parts.
- Another remedy is oil from the seeds of the *Kanji* tree (*Pongamiaglabra*). This is rubbed on.
- [753] Malaria: malaria is not attributed to spirits; possibly it may be that it is too recent a phenomenon to have been considered as such. The leaves of the *nim* tree are boiled in water and administered.
177 There is a climbing creeper called *gurj* (*Menispermum glabrum*) which may be used for malaria. The wood and bark of this plant is ground up and put into water. A heated tile is

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dipped into the water and the solution is then taken. Following the taking of the *gurj* solution a lemon is cut in half and salted and peppered. The two halves are left on the roof over-night and should be sucked the next morning. Another report is that a good remedy for malaria is to grind together *golmirich* (black pepper), *long* (cloves), and *mitha lakri* (licorice). The paste is put into a bit of water and swallowed.

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Pain in the abdomen : this is relieved by rubbing a mixture of kerosene and mustard oil over the affected part.

Smallpox : there is no remedy for this, as it is due to a goddess and her will, but care should be taken that the patient takes only light foods during this period.

Snake bites : one should chew leaves of the *nim* tree. Crooke notes that "in Ahmednagar when a man is bitten by a snake he is taken to Bahiroba's temple, crushed Nim leaves mixed with chillies are administered, and the branches are waved over his head."

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Stomach trouble : for this the leaves of the *Babul* tree, (*Acacia arabica*) should be chewed and eaten.

Swellings : if it be the thighs that have swelled, *ghi* should be applied and rubbed in well. At the same time *Hing* paste (a variety of *asafetida*) should be applied to the nails of the leg affected.

Wounds : *chuna* (lime) is mixed with the juice of the *Kattha* tree (*Acacia catechu*) and the paste applied. The juice of this tree has good astringent qualities.

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Fresh cow dung is very commonly applied, especially to the wounds of children.

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The bark of the *Tinsa* tree (*Eugenia dalbergioides*) is ground into a paste and stops the bleeding from a wound.

For the wounds made by thrusting the iron trident through the tongue or cheek at the *jawara* season, the following mixture should be applied : Lime juice, some ground onion, *ghi*, wood ashes and *pan* leaves (*Piper betel*).

It is usual that each village has its *baid* or medicine man who suggests these simple remedies and advises what should be done. However, there may be no such person in the village, and even if there is such, the Kols have great faith in the Baiga, and may go to him.

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1 Crooke, W., *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, p. 410.

MARRIAGE OF TREES

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spirits or goddesses. It has been noted that the mango branch plays an important part in wedding functions. It was also noted that in building the wedding booth Kols ought to use, if possible, wood from the *saleh* tree (*Boswellia serrata*) both for the main supports of the *markus* and for the sacred pole, the *magrohan*. The consensus of opinion is that for the latter the *saleh* is absolutely indispensable.

The *tulasi* plant (*Ocimum sanctum*) is found beside Kol shrines and in the courtyards of their houses. It should be watered daily and its leaves are said to have certain medicinal qualities, being especially effective in fevers. *Tulasi* was once a woman who engaged in religious austerities for a long time and at last dared to ask to become a wife of *Viahnu*. For this presumption *Tulasi* was cursed by *Lakshmi* the wife of *Vishnu*, and was turned into this plant. *Vishnu* comforted her by promising to be near her in the form of a *salagrama* stone. So they are often associated in worship and even in Kol shrines a *salagrama* stone is usually found close to the *tulasi* plant. The leaf is highly scented and a bit is often broken off by Kols and eaten with their food. During the evening hours it is worshipped by having a small *dip* lighted before it.

Dead trees are generally feared as the death of a tree is most certainly due to an evil spirit's influence and a *churesi* often kills a tree to make a residence for herself.

MARRIAGE OF TREES. The Kols have a ceremony for the marriage of trees. The mango tree is the one usually married and this should be done at the time it first begins to bear fruit. Unless such a tree has been married no adult should eat of the fruit, although a child may do so. There are at least two methods of marrying trees, both of which require the Brahmin priest. In the first instance a mango tree should be married to a tamarind tree (*Tamarindus indicus*). This tree may be near at hand, or even some distance from the mango tree. The ceremony appears to consist in having a married couple wind a cotton thread coloured with *haldi* seven times around the tree. They should move about the tree in a clockwise direction and as they do this the Brahmin recites sacred texts. First the mango tree is wound then the tamarind; if they are close enough together the thread may be stretched from one to the other. It is not unusual to find a mango and a tamarind tree planted close by. Many of the features of the regular wedding are incorporated, and following the function there is a feast.

In the second instance a small wooden peg, variously coloured, takes the place of the tamarind tree. This may be made out of tama-